



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

THE WATERWAYS OF VENEZUELA.

By Major STANLEY PATERSON, F.R.G.S.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.

TALKING the other day to some of the Powers of Finance regarding the exploitation of certain territories in Venezuela, I was met by the objection that it was impossible on account of the terrible expense of making and upkeeping roads; and I said, 'My good sirs, what *are* you talking about? Do you not know that in that country there are seven thousand miles of roads keeping themselves clean, trafficable, and in good order all the year round, without the expenditure of a single penny?' Whereupon the Powers looked envious. There is a stupendous height of mendacity unattainable even by a City financier, and this they judged I had reached at one bound. Therefore must I attempt to justify myself. In so talking of roads I spoke metaphorically, rivers being the natural traffic-ways of Venezuela.

First and foremost is the Orinoco, the mother to whose brown bosom the turbulent little streams from the far-away hill-country hurry to hide themselves—one of the mighty rivers of the earth, which, along with her mightier sister, the Amazon, irrigates a continent with the snowflakes of the Andes.

The voyager who, leaving Port of Spain in our British colony of Trinidad, steams away south-east through the Boca del Serpo, when the incoming tide runs fast, will soon have his eye caught by a curiously-defined line of ridged water across the ocean; one side calm, clear, and blue; the other thick, tawny, and turgid. This is the scene of Mother Orinoco's first fight for freedom, her protest against absorption in the Atlantic. And it does not last long, for here she fights but feebly, fending the foe, as it were, from her flanks; while a hundred miles farther south, strong with the accumulated energy of her thousand children, she rushes boldly at him, oftentimes beating him back well-nigh a hundred

miles, and leaving a ruck of branches, nuts, and all the outdrift of a tropic stream to mark the place of her final vanquishment.

While steaming down to watch this outburst, the traveller will coast along a low, flat land, fringed with small sand-dunes, covered by the densest forest vegetation, and intersected by a network of innumerable creeks and inlets. This is the delta of the Orinoco—a delta whose apex at Barrancas is one hundred and twenty miles from the coast, while its base is fully one hundred and eighty miles in width. Canoes can freely paddle through the majority of these creeks; but only two of the main branches are navigable by steamers, and a wise republican government has decreed that the right to navigate these branches shall be sold as a monopoly to him who is best able to pay for it. Now, the only other entrance is by the Boca Grande, or 'Great Mouth,' which opens straight in the face of the Atlantic; and when the east wind sweeps free across the ocean, driving great hills and valleys of water before it, Mother Orinoco gets the worst of the battle, and the great white waves, climbing over her impotent resistance, hurl themselves against Barima Island, then swinging away westward dash themselves into spindrift on the sandbar raised by the continual contest betwixt river and sea.

At these seasons no river-boat can face the sea, nor can even light-draught ocean-going steamers gain exit or entrance, as there is often less than twelve feet of water on the bar. Consequently few merchants will risk their merchandise on so uncertain a voyage; therefore the monopoly-holder rubs his hands and carries fat cargoes at fat freights, for his exits open into the peaceful Gulf of Paria, wherein storms are not, and his steamers carry to an English colony the wealth of a country four times larger than the United Kingdom.

The delta-land is not a country to hanker after,

notwithstanding the wondrous richness of its tropical vegetation, as it is flooded half-way up the tree-stems for about five months in the year, and is the abiding-place of fever and mosquitoes—inseparable companions in the West. Its only inhabitants are the wild beasts of the forest and a few scattered families of gaunt Guaraunos Indians, living in thatched shelters amidst the greenery of the river-bank, or on platforms built high up in a clump of *moriche* palms to ensure safety in times of inundation. These Guaraunos live principally by fishing and by hunting the manatee or sea-cow; pushing their light dug-out canoes through the purple-flowering water hyacinths in the maze of silent creeks, till they find the place of his feeding, when they patiently wait for many hours to spear their prey.

At Santa Catalina, on the Imatoca branch of the main river, some enterprising Americans procured a concession, built a hotel, and waited for visitors to use it as a summer resort. Some of them are still waiting; the others went away. Meantime the hotel serves as the headquarters of an iron company. At Barrancas, an unimportant mud-village, the steamy delta-land is left behind, and we meet the Orinoco rolling eastward in all her tawny glory, and, true to her similitude of femininity, changeful of mood in every few miles of her course.

Fifty miles above Barrancas is Guayana Viejo, 'the Gate of the Orinoco,' where all outward-bound ships are obliged to call for verification of papers. This place is guarded by an ancient mud-fort mounting two new Krupp guns, an armament of doubtful utility considering the garrison's ignorance of its working. During my first voyage on the river in 1896 the engineer of our launch, an escaped French convict, once a *quartiermaitre mecanicien* in the navy, but condemned to fourteen years in Cayenne, so astonished the soldiers by his facile manner of handling these heavy guns that he was promptly offered a commission to stop and work them. He wisely refused.

Yet another fifty miles westward lies Las Tablas, the landing-place of all stores for the well-known gold-mines round Guasapati and Upata, the main road from which towns strikes the river at this point. One hundred and twenty miles higher up is Ciudad Bolivar, the capital of the province of Guayana, the only town on the Orinoco worthy of the name; a city that has encountered many vicissitudes since, under the old Spanish rule, it was first known to the world as Angostura.

In the backwater below the town is congregated all the shipping of the river, from half-decked native launches and *piraguas* to the big paddle-steamer running the fortnightly mails to Trinidad, and the stern-wheelers belonging to the Orinoco Shipping and Trading Company, which, in addition to the Macareo monopoly, work the

Upper Orinoco and its tributaries. Every now and again one of these squat little boats, piled up with wood fuel till she looks like a floating timber-yard, waddles out into mid-stream, and, stoutly stemming the current, steams away westward to some scarce-heard-of tributary, from whence she reappears weeks later, deep laden with the country's crude products; which, disseminated through a thousand traders and factories, cleaned, stripped, and purified—crushed, crumbled, or coagulated—will grace the counters of our London shops under names so wondrous that half the original ingredients must blush to hear them.

From Bolivar to Caicara, a distance of over three hundred miles, the river flows steadily eastward with an average current of about three miles an hour, except at the Boca del Infierno, where we meet the first of the rapids of the Orinoco. Here the river is split in two by a large island, the southerly passage going by the name of Infierno, while the northerly is called the Torno, or Wheel, on account of its wild swirl of rushing water. At low-water the Infierno is considered the safest passage, as the hundreds of jagged rocks which constitute its main danger are visible. At high-water the Torno is preferable; and the way the small steamers are driven into the lower edge of the whirlpool, giddily swung round, and at the right moment forced to safety in the calm water above is little less than marvellous to those unaccustomed to river navigation. Notwithstanding these and other seeming dangers, an accident is unheard of; indeed, I believe only one steamer is known to have been lost on the river, and that one was wrecked through pure carelessness. All the way to Caicara the river runs between high mud-banks, top-fringed with belts of scrub or flowering trees, behind which stretch miles and miles of rich savanna land, broken by occasional outcrops of piled ironstone boulders, patches of dense forest, and impassable *moriche* swamp.

Let it be understood that in speaking of high banks I refer only to the summer or dry season (in reality our winter, October to April); because in the winter, when the snows melt and the rain pours down steadily for weeks and months without ceasing, as is the accepted custom of rain in the tropics, Mother Orinoco, freely fed by her thousand flooded tributaries, rises level with and frequently overflows her highest banks, swelling into a volume of foaming yellow water that sweeps along some forty or fifty feet above its ordinary winter level.

Every year the Orinoco becomes broader, for the mud-banks crumble away with alarming rapidity; day and night one can hear them falling with a splash and the rumble of distant thunder. This is greatly owing to the wearing effect of the current, but principally, according to the natives, to the action of the *rayas* or rays that abound in these waters. These fish, it is asserted, eat

away the soft mud of its banks just below the water-level, undermining great stretches in a single night.

As far as Caicara the valley of the Orinoco appears a dead flat, the great stretches of savanna reaching away on either side as far as the vision can travel. Only here and there one catches a glimpse of the blue mountain-tops beyond the distant horizon. Immediately beyond Caicara, a village small but important as a trading centre, the river, up to now running due east, takes a sudden bend and meets us directly from the south. Once round this bend the scenery improves, the savannas diminish in size, the forests become more noticeable, great boulders crop out along the river-bank, and mile by mile the mountains creep closer; until at Perico, nine hundred miles from the mouth, they hold the river tightly between them.

At Perico, or, to be accurate, at Puerto Zamuro, 'the Port of the Vultures,' three miles higher up-stream, navigation is stopped by the first of the really bad *raudals* or rapids of the Orinoco. Here the river runs for about three miles in a rocky and contracted bed, the fairway blocked by huge boulders and sharp reefs, round which the current rushes at reckless speed, carrying a great thresh of foam before it. Still, there is a passage, up and down which empty native boats are sometimes warped by cables; and it is even conceivable that a small and powerful steamer with a stout-hearted pilot might successfully compass the passage. I should prefer to observe the enterprise from the shore. This surmounted, the river, though turbulent in places, and boasting yet one somewhat difficult *raudal*, La Garcita, which in February of last year took me two days to pass in a native boat, is again navigable for some thirty miles; when another bad rapid, that of the Guahibos, blocks the way. This one is formed by a great reef of rock in three terraces stretching right athwart the stream. Over this the water pours in immense volume, falling thirty feet in about a hundred yards, and making the Guahibos more of a waterfall than a rapid. At low-water the higher portions of the reef are dry, and over these rocks, pitted by the action of the water with innumerable deep, cup-like cavities, canoes and boats have to be dragged or carried. On the eastern side, where the hurrying water has eaten a bay, there is a passage through which at high-water a steamer might pass by keeping close inshore, though this would scarce be worth the risk; for five miles farther south all navigation is stopped

by the worst of all the *raudals* on the Orinoco—that of Maipures, through which no living thing could pass unscathed.

Before reaching this point canoes and boats turn into the mouth of the Tuparro River, whence there is a road five miles long, on the Colombian side, across to Maipures, a village of six houses, used as a resting-place for goods and passengers travelling eastwards. In order to avoid the difficulties of transport through these several rapids a road is now in process of construction on the Venezuelan side opposite Maipures, and it is well within the limits of probability that in a couple of years the rush of a railway train will break the weird stillness of the virgin forest. Above Maipures the Orinoco is again free to navigation up to its farthest known point, practically its junction with the Cassiquare, a distance of one thousand three hundred miles. All this way it flows across the tableland of the Upper Orinoco valley, a huge extent of flat country, covered with dense primeval forest. Narrow gorges and rapids no longer exist; and the river, now with a width of about four miles, flows along, at times with a scarcely perceptible current, calm and placid as a lake. The banks are comparatively low; therefore, in the times of her summer greatness Mother Orinoco spreads her waters high over them, converting miles of forest into unwholesome swamp, whence arise clouds of white fever-mist that hang low over valley and river, and carry the germs of fever to the scanty inhabitants, eating away their energy and leaving them weak, listless, and anæmic.

This is the district of the caoutchouc or true india-rubber; and every thirty or forty miles along the river-bank we find a *barraca* or encampment of natives intent on the collection and preparation of the crude material of our future bicycle tyres. And these *gommeros*, as they are called, welcome the white man with exceeding joy, for well they know he will be plentifully supplied with small and compact 'remedies' for the *calentura* (fever) and the many other ailments the South American man is heir to. Besides, he may be kind enough to spare from his stock some few grains of coffee or rice that will help to supply the urgent needs of the household. For these *gommeros* are poor, and before leaving their villages are unable to provide themselves with sufficient provender to outlast the period of their forced exile. But let it be said they are honest, hard-working fellows, and of such as they have they give freely to the stranger.

The Amazon rubber-district is described in the 'Home of India-Rubber' in this *Journal* for 1890.



OF ROYAL BLOOD.

A STORY OF THE SECRET SERVICE.

CHAPTER XVI.—SECRET SERVICE.

MY dear fellow,' exclaimed Yermoloff between the whiffs of his eternal cigarette, as I was sitting in his room at the Russian Legation next morning, 'the whole thing is considered an absurdity at St Petersburg. An Anglo-German alliance is quite out of the question. Your Foreign Secretary is merely developing ideas of the principle formerly laid down by the Marquess of Macclesfield if he asks England to form an alliance with Germany for the purpose of making war upon Russia.'

'England will never declare war,' I answered.

My companion's merry face relaxed into a dubious smile. I had had some unimportant business to transact with him that morning regarding a British subject who had been arrested in Liège upon demand from the police in Moscow, where he was wanted for fraud; and I had made this visit an opportunity of learning the latest opinion upon the situation, and endeavouring to ascertain whether anything was known of the theft of the King's letters.

'We are well aware,' he said, 'that your Government has lately made advances to Germany, and that these overtures were not brought to a successful conclusion because no agreement could be arrived at as to certain terms. The policy of England is not only liable to change; it is also hazy, obscure, and never to be relied upon. This is the chief reason that England is driven from one quarter to another in her continual search for allies; no single English Government can successfully offer itself as an ally so long as the other European Powers prefer the victories of peace to those of war.'

'We have but little fear in that direction,' I answered, taking a fresh cigarette from his box and lighting it. He imported his own direct from Moscow, so they were always excellent.

'But there is danger in this strange policy of yours,' he said. 'Only at the last moment, when the smell of powder is in the air, does your shrewd old Marquess come to a decision as to which party in the strife it will be to England's better advantage to form an alliance with. The latest of your diplomatic evolutions, my dear Crawford, has, I assure you, created much amusement in St Petersburg.'

'Why?' I asked. This survey of our policy from the opposite point of view was interesting.

'The traditional Russophobia which seems to have infected you English has spread to a remarkable extent,' he answered, blowing some rings of smoke from his mouth. 'But even the

London *Times*, which only lately cast forth another of its thunderbolts at the Government at St Petersburg, has recognised that an Anglo-German alliance would cost England far more than the advantages are worth—more than the Triple Alliance can assure to English statecraft.'

'You mean that in order to conclude an alliance with Berlin, England must satisfy some heavy demands?' I observed.

'Exactly. Germany will never accept England as an ally on any other condition than conscription,' he answered. 'That, of course, your country is unable to grant.'

This was a fact which I particularly desired to know. I had purposely led the conversation up to this point, in order to ascertain whether Germany's secret reply to England, given only the day previous, was known in the other Legations. It was, and it showed that the secret service had been so actively at work at Berlin that the result of the Anglo-German negotiations was known in every capital in Europe. Only at midnight had a cipher telegram been received by Sir John from Downing Street, giving the negative result of the suggested alliance with Germany; yet, actually within an hour or two, other Powers were fully aware of all that had occurred, though it was extremely desirous they should be kept in ignorance. Truly, the secret service of several of the Powers is marvellously organised and absolutely complete.

'England can perfectly well afford to do without Germany,' I said quite unconcernedly, for our chat was an informal and friendly one. 'The foreign press—and the diplomatic circle for the matter of that—are fond of talking of England's isolation in the Far East; yet it is curious they don't recognise that our occupation of Weihai-Wei was effected in concert with Japan, our loan was effected in concert with Germany, our railway scheme was financed in concert with Belgium, the mineral wealth of Hunan is being exploited in concert with Italy, and our policy of the 'open door' is admittedly in harmony with that of America. An attempt, therefore, to upset your policy as a whole involves Japan, Germany, Italy, and America. Such is isolation!'

'Ah, my dear Crawford,' laughed my friend flicking off his cigarette-ash, 'the rivalry between your country and mine is not ended. In India, for example, you trust for defence to a native army of Indian soldiers with a stiffening of British troops, while we hold our Asiatic possessions in strength. Our ideal is that of a subject population, blindly subservient to the military and civil authority exercised by Russians in the name

of our Czar; while the dream of you English is to create loyal, self-governed, and self-defending citizens. The latter seems, of course, the nobler ideal; but where an Oriental race is concerned the former is the wiser, you may depend upon it.'

'Ah!' I said, 'our methods are different.'

He shrugged his shoulders significantly.

'At your Downing Street your Ministry know well enough our intention is to develop Siberia and not to attack India. The English are not blind; neither are they fools,' he said. 'But I tell you, Crawford, my dear fellow, that a reaction has set in; and, according to report which reaches us from London, people are beginning to talk of the senselessness of those views which aim at concluding an alliance with Germany, England's chief competitor for the trade of the world and in colonial expansion; while at the same time there is a section of your statesmen who openly evince a preference for a *rapprochement* with Russia.'

'With Russia?' I exclaimed.

Again the dark-faced Secretary of Legation shrugged his shoulders expressively.

'It would have been wiser,' he said, 'if your Government had approached ours a couple of years ago; for it would have placed England on a far safer basis than she is at present. At this very moment England is on the very edge of a volcano.'

I started. Such ominous words plainly showed that my friend held knowledge of some catastrophe imminent.

I, however, affected disregard for his prognostications, and only smiled, answering:

'It is always so, now that you have your alliance with France.'

'Ah!' he said, 'you English are an unfortunate nation.'

These words of his increased my fear that the blow so long dreaded at Downing Street had fallen. The unusual activity in Paris, of which we had received word, and these declarations by Paul Yermoloff, went to show that something had occurred to cause undue excitement in the French and Russian Legations, and that the storm long brewing over Europe was on the very point of bursting.

For some time longer we chatted; and, while I betrayed no sign of anxiety at his words, my friend sought to impress upon me the benefit to be derived from an Anglo-Russian alliance. Then at last I left, and took a cab back to the Embassy, having learned one or two things which could not fail to be disconcerting at Downing Street.

Whatever may be said about the diplomatic methods by which the Russian Government accomplish its purpose, it is impossible not to admire, perchance even to envy, its continuity of policy, and the unswerving determination with which it is carried out. It is the same in every

capital. From time to time some check occurs; but as soon as it is removed or surmounted the work is renewed with as much vigour as if it had never come to a halt. The strong point in Russian statecraft is, that it knows how to wait as well as when to strike.

When an hour later I related to Sir John Drummond my conversation with Yermoloff he stroked his short gray beard thoughtfully, and after a moment's pause said:

'Let me have the cipher-book. We must wire to Downing Street. Spies have again been at work somewhere. Our diplomacy of late seems always to be undermined or rendered abortive by secret agents.'

I took from the great safe in the corner of the room the flat volume containing the ciphers. Only a few weeks ago they had been changed because there was suspicion that knowledge of the ciphers had leaked out somewhere. Then, when Sir John had finished writing the telegram, I sat down, and with the aid of the book reduced it to an amazing and puzzling array of numerals.

The telegraphic despatch was a long explanatory one, and I myself at once went forth to the chief post-office to send it off, while Sir John ordered the carriage and drove to the Royal Palace to acquaint the King with the latest development of affairs consequent upon the mysterious theft.

The loss of the correspondence had placed Sir John, clever and distinguished diplomatist as he was, in a very unenviable position; for not only was England's honour at stake, but the honour of a friendly sovereign and the goodwill of a kingdom which, although small in extent, is of considerable importance in the political situation. Sir John Drummond, whose experience extended over thirty years in nearly every capital in Europe, had admitted himself baffled. Of all Her Majesty's Ministers at the foreign courts he was one of the cleverest and shrewdest, able to conduct the most delicate piece of diplomacy; and, aided by his affable and popular wife, had been the means more than once of securing to his country concessions of the utmost worth. Indeed, the Queen had few more valued servants in her corps of ambassadors than Sir John Drummond; and the Marquess of Macclesfield had often openly expressed his entire confidence in what he was fond of playfully calling 'Drummond's sagacity.' Therefore, it was the more serious that, just at this crisis, such a mysterious and marvellous theft should have been committed, for undoubtedly the Belgian King regarded him as personally responsible for the safe keeping of those compromising letters.

The ways of French diplomacy were, however, a perfect labyrinth of intrigue and mystery. In the pay of France are all sorts and conditions of men and women, who will hesitate at nothing in order to get at the secrets of those in opposition to them.

Truly, the life of a British Ambassador is the reverse of tranquil, surrounded as he is by this veritable army of secret agents intent upon combating British diplomacy and rendering it abortive, ever striving and struggling to serve their masters by prying into every secret in the Embassy archives.

On my return to the Rue de Spa some half-hour later, Salmon, the English *concierge*, in his funny blue cutaway-coat and peaked cap—the man so well known in the diplomatic circle in Brussels—told me that a telephonic message had just arrived from the Palace, stating that Sir John wished me to proceed there. Therefore I re-entered the cab, and in fifteen minutes or so I was shown through those long, handsome corridors of white and gold, my eyes ever on the alert to catch a glimpse of *Mélanie*; and at length was ushered into the salon where my chief was closeted with the King.

The room was by no means of large dimensions, and yet it presented a serious and imposing appearance. The gray-green panels, the dark-brown embossed leather on the walls, the dark-green curtains of the windows, and the paintings by Dutch artists, several of them in black frames, all combined to breathe a spirit of earnestness. One felt that every article in that room had its own history. For example, there stood an enormous globe before the window on the left, and close by it a tall desk at which His Majesty stood to work; near the window on the right was the work-table of the King, covered with many personal souvenirs, including a signed portrait of Her Majesty Queen Victoria in a frame set with brilliants. A glance through the window showed the handsome square and well-kept Park beyond; while straight in front hung the famous picture of the Great Elector at the battle of Fehrbellin, his eagle eyes seeming to sparkle with his favourite motto, '*Deus fortitudo mea*.' A couple of well-filled bookcases, the number of maps and plans upon the walls, and the littered state of the work-table were ample evidence that to be a reigning monarch was no sinecure.

I had bowed on entering, and the King, with that courtesy which has always distinguished him, rose from his chair, a tall, full-bearded, imposing figure in gray frockcoat, and returned my bow.

'His Majesty wished to see you, Crawford,' explained Sir John, turning to me; and as he uttered the words I saw by the expression upon his countenance that the discussion had been an extremely grave one.

'Yes,' said the kindly-faced, elderly, plainly-dressed man, sinking back into his chair and giving me permission to be seated, 'Sir John has told me of your conversation at the Russian Legation to-day; and, as I understand that you are engaged in the secret service of the British Foreign Office, anything that I may say to you will, of course, remain secret.' He spoke English perfectly, if with just a slight accent.

'Your Majesty has my pledge of secrecy,' I answered.

'The theft of those letters must, of course, have a most serious effect upon your diplomacy; and not only must it affect me personally, but it may result in hostilities against England,' observed His Majesty, his dark eyes fixed upon me. 'I happen to know something of the feeling in Paris; and undoubtedly it is the universal opinion that this is the opportunity for a declaration of war. The differences between England and France regarding Egypt and the Niger Question have served to imperil the European situation. Well, I am, as you probably know, a staunch supporter of my friend Sir John Drummond, and of the British policy. To the Powers my kingdom is supposed to be neutral; but in event of war British troops would no doubt find a safe landing in Antwerp, and be accorded every facility for reaching the Rhine.'

'I thank your Majesty for such an expression of friendship towards England, especially in these circumstances,' observed Sir John cordially.

'My friendship for England is due to the fact that the Marquess of Macclesfield is always just, fair, and upright; and, further, that the policy of England is to protect the weak against the strong,' answered the King, leaning back in his chair. 'This loss, of course, occasions me the greatest anxiety, yet I cannot lay any blame upon either the British Government or upon yourself. From what you explained the other day, the utmost care was taken of the file, and it was carried by special messenger with other secret despatches. Nevertheless, we have to look events resolutely in the face. The papers have been stolen by some person unknown; their contents are evidently known to every French Minister in Europe, and war is at this moment imminent.'

'Do you suppose that to be so?' inquired Sir John quickly.

'I cannot see how we can convince ourselves of any other result,' His Majesty replied, his brow furrowed in thought. France has everything to gain by thus taking England by surprise.' Then, turning to me, the King said, 'I should like to hear from your own lips the words used by the Russian Secretary of Legation. He is your friend—is he not?'

'Yes, your Majesty. We are personal friends. I have known him at other Embassies for a number of years;' and, proceeding, I gave a detailed account of the conversation, almost as I have here written it. With his eyes fixed upon me, the King listened with marked attention.

'And this Yermoloff is rather a smart man—is he not?' His Majesty exclaimed.

'He is a rather good fellow,' I answered. 'He was stationed at Rome a year ago, and it is said to have been in a great measure due to his astuteness that Russia gained the concession she did over the recent affair in Abyssinia.'

'Ah! I remember,' he said. 'That was a piece of very clever diplomacy. Has he ever visited you at the Embassy?' he inquired.

'Never. He comes to my rooms to smoke sometimes, and now and then I go to the Russian Legation.'

'Ah! I quite understand,' he smiled. 'And you make good use of your time when you are there—eh? Where are your rooms situated?'

'In the Place Louise,' I answered.

'You have never had occasion to take the file of correspondence now missing home with you, I suppose?'

'Never,' I answered. 'The documents had never left the safe at the Legation, of which Sir John always holds the master-key, until they were placed in the despatch-box, sealed, and taken to London.'

'Extraordinary!' His Majesty ejaculated. 'The thieves evidently outwitted you in a manner that is truly amazing.'

'We are very seriously handicapped,' observed Sir John, 'by not being able to discover into whose hands the correspondence has actually fallen.'

'Of course,' the King said. 'If the robbery were committed for the purposes of gain—and we must suppose that it was—then I myself would have been prepared to pay almost any sum to recover the documents. It is most fatal at this juncture that they should have been secured by our enemies—absolutely the worst catastrophe that could have happened to England or to Belgium.'

'Unfortunately that is only too true,' said the Ambassador, sitting pensive and puzzled.

'There is still another matter, M'sieur Crawford,' continued the King, rising and opening a drawer in his work-table, and then returning in a moment with something in his hand. 'You are a member of the secret service; therefore, perhaps, you might assist me in a small matter. Do you happen to know the original of this photograph?'

He handed me a rather soiled and faded carte-visite.

One glance at it was sufficient for identification. Breathless, rigid, dumfounded, I sat with it in my hand.

THE CORNISH COOK.

By H. D. LOWRY.



HE passion of the Cornish for using the most unlikely materials in the manufacture of pies is well expressed in a saying still current in the west. The devil, they say, has always been afraid to venture across the Tamar, lest he should appear to the natives merely as a something which had not hitherto been used for this particular purpose, and meet at once with an ignominious fate. Certainly the pies of Cornwall are—or, rather, were—compounded strangely enough to justify some saying of the kind.

To begin at the beginning, we must describe the making of clotted cream, for this enters largely into the composition of the pies, and gives them not a little of their individuality. The fresh milk is poured into tin pans, which are usually about ten inches in depth. At the top they may be about twenty inches in width, but this grows less and less towards the bottom. The pans are then placed on the slab of the stove and slowly heated. There is, of course, a proper temperature for the carrying out of this operation; but the Cornish farmer does not dream of a thermometer as being among the utensils needed in a dairy, and the temperature reached by the milk during this operation is altogether a matter of guess-work—which is to say, of chance. Nor is one quite certain that Cornish cream is any the worse for this. It is probably scalded invariably at a

temperature considerably higher than that which is theoretically right. In this way a goodly quantity of curd gets coagulated; and when at last the pans are set in the dairy to cool, and a thick golden crust forms upon the top, it consists of a mixture of curd and cream. This makes the final product more nutritious, and its only drawback is when the 'cream' is made into butter. It is poured unthinned into a big shallow tub, and there worked round and round by the hand. It forms into a stodgy mass quite suddenly—it is never granulated—and all the washing in the world will not suffice to free it thoroughly from curd. Cornish people like a deal of salt in their butter, for we usually like the thing to which we have been accustomed in the days of our youth, and the old-fashioned farmer had to use large quantities of this antiseptic, or the curd must have made his butter sour almost immediately.

Clotted cream may be eaten with all sorts of fruit-tarts and preserves. It is best, however, thickly spread on home-made bread, and then covered with a big serpentine design in treacle. This is 'thunder and lightning.' The pleasantest cream, and that which makes the most delicious butter, is that which has a slight flavour of peat. This flavour must have been universal in the old days of the big open hearth, when each of the tins stood to be scalded on a little brazier wherein a fire of turf and furze burned brightly. By the

bye, it may as well be settled once and for all that the art of making clotted cream is entirely Cornish so far as this country is concerned. It is quite possible that the Phenicians may have taught it to those from whom they bought tin when they came over to St Michael's Mount in the days before Christ. But, at any rate, it was from their neighbours across the Tamar that the men of Devon first learned to make what many now ignorantly entitle 'Devonshire' cream. Upon this point the opinion of all good Cornish folk is unanimous, and they would think ill of any one who should endeavour to persuade them to the contrary.

To come to the pies and pasties, it must be remembered that they are the invention of people who knew nothing at all of the uses of the oven. The implements they had were all connected with the open hearth, and their fuel was peat and gorse. There was the tripod or 'brandice;' the crock with its three legs; the 'baking-iron,' a flat slab of iron usually fitted with a handle; and the 'baker,' which covered the baking-iron. This 'baker,' by the bye, was used for another purpose than that of cooking. Let us suppose that some small theft had been committed about the farm, and that it was desired to discover the guilty person, so that no man might need to suspect his neighbour unjustly. The farmer would go out and capture his smallest cockerel—a bantam for choice—and place it under the 'baker' on the table. Then the whole household would be assembled in the great gloomy kitchen, and in the order of age each would go forth and lay a hand on the 'baker,' saying solemnly, 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, *speak!*' At the touch of the guilty hand the imprisoned bird would crow loudly, and the guilty person stood revealed.

The usual manner of using the baking-iron and 'baker' was as follows: The fire was got into a proper condition, and then the baking-iron was laid upon the hearth. When it had reached the proper temperature it was carefully cleaned, and the pie that was to be baked was placed upon it. The fire was then raked round, and it rested with the cook to settle in her own mind, as by a sort of clairvoyance, at what moment the operation had been completed. In these days a good deal of wrong-doing may be wrought by the cook who does not know how to manage her oven, or neglects to watch it; but imagine what opportunities of disaster surrounded the woman who had to make use of 'baker' and baking-iron!

Before coming to the pies one may as well deal with the pasties. It may be alleged by the supercilious that these are merely turnovers such as any competent cook can turn out; but the fact remains that only a Cornish cook ever made pasties that Cornish people would be content to eat. The pasty in its most delicious form contains beef cut small, with sliced onions and

potatoes; it is cooked to a delicate brownness, and is so delicious when it comes straight from the oven that one marvels not a little that any one had ever the patience to wait and find out that it is even more delightful when it has had time to get cold. If ever you are in the west and are going a long and lonely walk along the cliffs, or are adventuring upon the sea, you will do the wisest thing possible if you entreat your hostess to make you a goodly store of pasties after this fashion. They are of such a shape that they go easily into pocket or knapsack, and they create an appetite more surely than any tonic ever invented by the doctors.

A story is told at the expense of Cornish cooks which may be worth repeating. A miner had gone to work for the first time, taking for sustenance a pasty made by his young wife, who was very eager to please. He had no sooner returned home than she asked him how he had enjoyed his food. 'Never had no such pasty in my life,' he replied indignantly. 'In fact, I shouldn't call it a pasty myself. I dropped en, and 'twas broke in pieces. Dedn' drop but three fathom, and 'twas broke in pieces. Why, when I was living with mother I used to have pasties you could drop five fathom, or ten, and they'd be as good after as they was before. They *was* pasties!'

The Cornish miner's wife has so little money at her disposal that she can rarely afford to make such a pasty as is described above. Usually she has to content herself with a bit of fat pork with potatoes or turnips—and in Cornwall the swede was until lately the only kind of turnip of which the majority had any knowledge. It is not to be wondered at that even the strongest appetites fail before this after a little while. Then the good wife goes to the grocer's and spends twopence on a pound of the cheapest dates. These make a pasty which is attractive as a change, and should be hardly less nutritious than the fat pork and turnips. Another change is the hoggan, a cake of dough studded with 'figs,' or raisins.

Almost anything may be made into pasties. They are delicious when filled with fresh fruit, and there are moments when a pasty wherein an egg has been deftly enwrapped is not to be despised. There is perhaps only one substance which has never been used in the manufacture of a genuine article of the kind, and that is minced meat. One does not know why, but it never has been used. By some curious freak of chance it is a substance upon which the cook who is not Cornish blunders almost inevitably when she sets forth to demonstrate that anybody who has the least culinary knowledge can make a pasty.

To come to the pies, it is only the Cornish who know how to make a really satisfactory beef-steak pie. The one thing they seem to do which

is not usual elsewhere is, that they cut the steak, not into lumps, but into thin slices. Each of these they roll round a small piece of the fat, and the reader who has no experimental knowledge of the result must be content with the assurance that nothing like it has been attained beyond the limits of the Duchy.

There is no knowledge remaining of the materials used in the making of what used to be known as 'staunn'in' pie.' It was made, however, very much in the likeness of the Melton Mowbray pie; it was placed on the baking-iron and covered with the 'baker.' Then the cook went out to the place where the fuel was stored, and, shifting the furze-fagots, secured a goodly store of the 'bruss'—the small fragments and dust which lay below. With this she covered the 'baker,' and so secured what was technically known as a 'soaking fire.' The pie was left to undergo this ordeal until the cook judged that the time was come to remove the 'baker.' Then the top crust was pierced with a small hole, and through this a quantity of thinnish cream was poured. The pie was ready to be served, and one can imagine it was sufficiently delicious.

Sweet giblet-pie was a sort of mince-pie, with which were incorporated the giblets of a goose, boiled and chopped fine. Muggety-pie was made of certain portions of the entrails of a sheep, flavoured with parsley and enriched with much

cream. Another pie which we remember seems to have consisted mainly of leeks. When it was taken from the oven the crust was lifted and cream added liberally. There was a pie which consisted of hardly less parsley than veal, and this also was enriched with cream. There was squab-pie, an exceedingly well-savoured dish, made of fat mutton and apples in alternate layers. As if this were not enough, the genius of the cook added onions and raisins.

After this there is nothing remarkable in mackerel-pie, wherein the fish lies in milk and is baked under the crust. Star-gazing pie was a little more interesting. The principal ingredient is another fish, the pilchard. The heads of the fish adorned the upper crust, and, gazing pathetically towards the sky, gave the pie its name.

Conger was also used in pies, and, indeed, the list might be continued indefinitely. Probably the fact to be gathered is that the people of Cornwall have always been poor, and that Cornish cooks have been compelled to find uses for everything that could possibly be considered edible. Probably the use of saffron in cake is in itself a confession of poverty, for the simplest cake looks rich in 'goodness' when it has been coloured by this means. And, as to the pies, is it not evident that there may be a good deal of truth in the proverb quoted at the beginning of this article?

THE WIT OF LAUHLAN MACINTYRE.

By MAYNE LINDSAY.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.

TWO men studied each other in the Hamirbagh collector's office. They sat face to face, collarless and perspiring, while the punkah squeaked above their heads and the glare of a May sun filtered through the venetians. The thermometer on the file-strewn table stood at ninety-eight. The room smelt of matting; it was close, oven-like, and gloomy, lit only by the fingers of daylight through the shutters and a small window high in the wall, over which a ragged reed-curtain dangled from a nail.

'So you're the Collector Sahib!' was Macintyre's mental comment as his eyes ran over the figure that lolled, knees crossed, before him. 'You look straight. I wonder what you're like to work under?'

'And you're the Police-wallah!' criticised the mind of Faulkner. 'You're the "keen" man I applied for in the room of poor, slow, amiable Joscelyn, to settle Hira Singh. You are an uncommonly good-looking specimen. And, dear me! there's plenty of you. Six feet two in your stockings, for a guess.' Then he said aloud, 'I'm

glad you've come. Hamirbagh is a poor station from the social point of view; just we two and my joint-magistrate, Instill, and the doctor—no ladies. But there is plenty of work, and Hira Singh.'

'Yes? . . . I'm glad there are no ladies: they're not in my line. . . . I should like to know all you can tell me about Hira Singh.'

'Not your line?' puzzled Faulkner in his mind. 'H'm! I should say you were very much in *their* line, my young friend; these dark-eyed, long-legged fellows turn all the women's heads.' Aloud: 'I wish I could tell you something that might help you to lay hands upon him. But all I can say is that Hira Singh is the Prince of Darkness. Worried old Joscelyn into his grave (the doctor said typhoid, but that's my diagnosis); wore me a stone lighter in three months; turned Instill, who is the prop of an Evangelical arch-deacon, into a rank blasphemer. There!'

Macintyre smiled gravely at the whimsicality, and at the petulant tone in which the collector delivered it. He concluded his appraisal with the reflection that if Faulkner were as looks and manner proclaimed him, he should like the man

—which was, for a cautious Scot, an enormously favourable estimate.

'Hira Singh seems to be a superior being to the ordinary village-budmash-turned-burglar-dacoit,' he said.

'Oh yes; his methods are quite Western. You heard of his great *coup*—the robbery of the Bilsil Nawab's jewels?'

'The bare outline. No particulars.'

'Well, they are worth hearing; if only to give you an instance of the man's extraordinary smartness.'

'Some months ago, just after Hira had looted the properties of some zemindars in the neighbouring districts—oh, but Trevor and Grigson were savage!—our fat friend at Bilsil became seriously alarmed for his own belongings. He had no wish to be rushed at night by a band of desperadoes, his women's quarters ransacked, and his portly person drubbed till he discovered the uttermost pice. That had happened to the other old gentlemen, you know. So he came to the office here, and asked me if Government would let him lodge his valuables for safe keeping in the treasury until Hira Singh was caught, or killed. I saw no objection; and after a confidential interview, all in the strictest privacy with closed doors, as you and I sit now, it was settled that the things should be concealed inside a *jampan* (litter) and conveyed over the fifteen miles hence from Bilsil as if they were the most precious human jewel in his zenana. The Nawab Sahib was to put them into the *jampan* with his own hands, and to despatch the train without letting any one in it know that only a bogus lady lurked behind the curtains. That, he swore, was faithfully done; and I have trust in his cupidity. And yet, what happened? Hira Singh and his men fell upon the cavalcade four miles from the city, shot and knifed the two resisting sowars, and made off into the riverside jungle with the contents of the litter. If I had posted a public notice of our arrangement on the *kacheri* (courthouse) door they could not have known more about it. And now, I ask you, what is one to do with a ruffian like that?'

Macintyre's brows were knitted, and he did not answer.

'The man is abnormally quick and acute; that we know from the rapidity with which he slips from district to district, and the pertinacity which he always employs in fixing upon a profitable victim. He is brave, too. You remember how he dashed out when Currie had ringed him in the deserted indigo-factory that was his den for so long? Tore through a cordon of policemen like a whirlwind—right and left shots—Currie winged by the first one—on to the inspector's horse—the impudence of the rascal!—and so clear away. But it's not that which has saved him for two years. We have brave men, and smart men too. No, it's his information; and there is something

most unholy about its accuracy. Of all the plans which Joscelyn and I made in strict confidence—here, sir, in my private office, there was not one for which he was ever unprepared; and no matter to what part of the district we arranged to go, Hira Singh had decamped to another quarter. He is always forewarned, and meanwhile three districts are the laughing-stock of the Provinces. I'm not thin-skinned like Trevor and Grigson—I'm not so young as they are; but, by George! it's fifteen months since I showed my face at headquarters.'

He rose to end the interview. Macintyre stood up too. He opened the door and threw back the shutters, and a rush of choking heat swept into his face.

'Whe-ew! It's hot,' he said. Then, his brows still knitted over the first subject: 'The source of information! That is what must be traced. I don't like wild-goose chases. There is a leakage somewhere.'

'Well, find it,' said Faulkner laconically. He had relapsed into his chair, and his pen was already busy with notes and signatures. 'The wit of Police-wallah Sahib Macintyre against the principalities of evil! Good-morning.'

Macintyre walked across the courthouse compound to where his horse waited in the shade of a tree.

The Hamirbagh district offices were badly situated, now that the population had expanded under imperial rule. The time had been when the block formed by the courts, the collector's office, and the guard-room had enjoyed isolation; their thatched roofs and deep verandas were cheek by jowl with the city now. The *maidan* had dwindled to a slip of sun-baked soil, upon which the offices backed, and the crazy native buildings of the bazaar encroached upon it, their tottering, flimsy upper stories bulging above the narrow space. On three sides there was still breathing-room; but the rear of the official quadrangle had become a lane, bordered by the office wall (blank except for a couple of high reed-curtained windows) and by the shops, with their mysterious dwelling-rooms above. The Government had refused to buy the space when it was unoccupied; and now it paid for its stupidity. The noise of the city, the smell of dust, the reek of dung-fuel and wood-smoke, the endless chatter and jingle of the bargaining natives, remained to the staff as a reminder of their predecessors' folly.

Macintyre mounted, and the policemen turned out as he passed the guard-room and left the compound to fill with litigants and orderlies. He wheeled at the entrance and made for the lane.

The crowd, into which an officious policeman had plunged with an outcry, was thick and busy, and the funnel-like avenue was not easy to clear. Macintyre waited for a minute, and looked about him.

The sun beat upon the scene; and the terra-

cotta petticoats, the yellow *saris*, the brown skins, and the clinking bangles blended into the picture. The vendors squatted upon their heels on the open thresholds; the passers-by surged up and down before them. The effect was dazzling; and Macintyre lifted his eyes to the balconies for relief.

Here, at least, was peace. They were unoccupied, and the windows were silent, showing a decorous exterior which, if rumour said true, was not altogether in keeping with the city's reputation. Only a woman's veil drooping upon a lattice, and a *sitar* flung upon the boards below it, gave a touch of levity. Such was Macintyre's first impression, and then it passed, as an opened shutter flung him a glimpse of life within.

A hand had opened the blind, and it was the flash of diamonds that caught the policeman's eyes. He looked; and they found a woman's face, and stayed there. A small, exquisitely poised head, well set upon a rounded neck, peered out at him. The woman laughed and pushed the shutter wide, as if the sight pleased her. He saw a handsome face with heavy brows and reckless eyes; she leaned out with unabashed interest, and her teeth gleamed. For a few seconds they stared at each other without a movement. Then she flirted her hand with a gesture of salutation, of defiance, of admiration—it was each and all—the shutter clapped to, and the window was dead again.

'H'm,' reflected Macintyre soberly, his Celtic blood a little stirred by the apparition. 'Delilah, and a splendid creature. Who is Samson? Those jewels were bought by a long purse. Half-caste apparently. What is she doing in the noisiest, dirtiest quarter of Hamirbagh? There is an incongruity, and it must be considered. . . . Hech, but the wits of Lauchlan Macintyre have ample work before them!' He gathered his reins and trotted up the lane.

The doctor threw down his racquet. The high-walled court was stifling. The marker, outlined in the gallery against an evening sky, had taken advantage of a pause to call to the players. He waved towards the compound that surrounded the ramshackle court, bath, and billiard-room of the Hamirbagh Club; and they heard the thud of hoofs approaching.

'There they are, Instill!' The doctor wriggled into a Norfolk jacket. 'Now, what d'you bet they caught him at Kandua?'

'Look at 'em,' said Instill, stooping under the door of the racquet-court, and emerging into the veranda. 'There's your answer.'

Indeed, the limp and dejected attitudes of Faulkner and Macintyre, as they climbed stiffly down from their ponies, wiped their faces, and called for drinks, had no story of success to tell. They were white with dust and fatigue, and the ponies had sweated to a lather. Faulkner

took a revolver out of his pocket as he sat down, and tossed it viciously on to the floor. They drank their pegs with the haste of thirsty men.

'Ah!' said the doctor sympathetically. 'You didn't—?'

'No; we didn't. Flown, as usual, from the scene of his triumph, and left nothing behind him but a very frightened old *bannia*, and—that was our contribution—thirty hot policemen. He caught the old man ambling along with his escort and his money-bags early yesterday morning. The escort ran; and Hira Singh lightened their employer of all his rupees and every stitch of clothing. After that he marched to Kandua village, locked the village policemen and the elders into a godown, and spent the heat of the day fed and sheltered by their property. Of course when our party arrived he had fled.—What is it, Macintyre?'

'If you'll excuse me,' said Macintyre, 'I am going to run down to *kacheri* and look through my letters. I am not at the end of my tether yet, and I don't feel like resting. Lend me your *tat* to go down on, doctor—will you? Thanks.' And he was gone.

'I would rather not be Hira Singh when Macintyre catches him,' said Faulkner. 'He's raging—absolutely foaming. Well, so am I; but I can work it off with a little profanity. He shuts his mouth and stews in his own juice. Sorry for him; but we have all had our turn.' He lay back luxuriously, cocked his feet on to an arm of the chair, and began to recoup his energies by timely idleness.

The three pairs of eyes saw the policeman settle into the doctor's saddle, with the thoughtful frown which Hira Singh's misdeeds had called forth stamped deep into his forehead. He trotted past the tennis-ground into the avenue of tamarisks that led to the heat and haze of the city. The *sais* laboured behind him in the rising dust.

'I wonder if Martineau's letter has come, and what news the inspector has for me?' His busy brain began to arrange his thoughts. 'Wild-goose chases are no good; I said it at first, and to-day's work proves me right. Let's put my conjectures into working order.'

'Hira Singh has an informant in Hamirbagh; his knowledge invariably coincides with the extent of our plans. It is somebody who is cognisant, not merely of bazaar rumour, but of the consultations of the powers; which means there is a leakage, and the leakage is being tapped.'

'There is a stranger woman who lives in the bazaar for no ostensible reason. It is very fortunate that she seems to take a friendly interest in my appearance; it is indiscreet of her, for it attracts my attention, and it enables me to know when she is, and is not, at home; and I fancy the knowledge is worth something. To

proceed. The lady, having taken an apparent fancy to me, never fails to look out when I pass and she is in her apartments. But she is away sometimes; and her disappearances dovetail between the conception of our plans and Hira Singh's actions to frustrate them. What better spy can be found than a woman? Then, arguing on that premise, whose official virtue has she undermined?

'If— Well, we shall see. Here is the lane.'

He walked the pony down it. The sun was low behind the minarets and house-tops; its rays slanted over the jostling crowd and its many colours, and it bathed the tall Highlander, white and comely as a god, in golden splendour. The people scattered before him; the salesmen stopped chaffering for a moment; and a woman looked from under a crazy eave, and pushed the shutter wide. She stared across the balcony, as she had done a dozen times before, with an undisguised admiration to which Macintyre did not respond. His stolidity piqued her; evidently she was unaccustomed to contempt: her gesture betokened amazement that the Scotsman could treat her attention with indifference. Macintyre kept his gaze between the pony's ears, but he felt the woman crane over as he passed, and he smelt musk through the reek of the bazaar.

'At home to-day.' He turned into the *kacheri* compound and dismounted. 'Tell the Inspector Sahib I want to see him,' he said to the sentry, and passed on to his office. The room was next door to, and a facsimile of, the collector's office; it had the same cell-like appearance, the same high, bare walls, the same square window on the lane side. A bundle of letters lay upon the table, and he tossed them over and tore open a sealed letter.

'Martineau? Yes, it's the Delhi postmark. Good man, Martineau. What news?' His eye ran over the letter.

... 'Your description tallies with that of a young woman named Myra Pereira, a typical member of a Delhi family of long-established disrespectability. I believe even her relations have discarded her now: she committed the unforgivable sin, and disappeared with a high-caste native—some one without even the thirty-second strain of British engine-driver's blood to brighten his complexion. We don't want her back here, thank you; she is too greedy of jewels and soft raiment; it's not good for the probity of her friends. The last was a bank clerk, and he thought a forged cheque would help to propitiate the goddess. . . . So long.'

Macintyre patted the letter approvingly.

'That is very good. Hira Singh is a man of high caste; he is also active in acquiring other people's properties. There's the inspector—in a hurry, too!' He left the office door open and ran into the courtyard.

The inspector, a big, well-groomed Moham-medan, in scarlet turban and khaki uniform, advanced to meet him with some eagerness.

'Well, Inspector Sahib, what news?'

'I have had the woman watched, sahib. She has kept within doors for two days; but half-an-hour ago a beggar approached her and delivered a message; and now—even now—she has left her house, veiled, riding upon a pony, and goes towards the city gate. She goes slowly, as if she waited for the night, or for men to join her. Very slowly, sahib; easy to be kept in sight, as is being done, or to be overtaken.'

'Yes; and the beggar?'

'He has been arrested. There is much dust upon him; he has travelled fast and far.'

'*Bahut accha* [very good]. It is all quite satisfactory. Now, Inspector Sahib, send a constable with me to search the woman's room, whence I go now; and do you despatch twenty sowars by a circuitous route, to tarry for orders under the city wall; also an orderly to wait for my message at the end of the lane. What instructions has the spy?'

'To keep the woman in sight, to report her direction as he passes the *thana* [police station], and to give swift warning if she quickens her pace.'

Macintyre and the policeman crossed the lane on foot, and dived through the gaping crowd into an alley that ran behind the shops. They pushed their way past the litter of the kennel, and found a rickety stairway that climbed to the upper floor against the outer wall. Macintyre ran up it, creaked along the balcony, pushed aside a curtain quickly, and advanced with boldness. It was the woman's room; a glance into the street below assured him of the fact; and the overhanging story projected so far above the shops that it seemed almost as if he could touch the Government Offices by leaning well over the balcony. The room was empty, and there was no tell-tale relic to reward his acuteness; only a *sitar*, a native bed, a couple of clay water-jars, and a medley of discarded finery and broken trinkets. A woman's shoe lay beside the bed. The room was very hot, and smelt of musk.

Macintyre turned everything over and searched for evidence. There was nothing to tell that the cast-off garments were stolen goods, or that the twisted bangles and scattered beads were the proceeds of Hira Singh's dacoity. The babble of the street droned through the window; the reek of hot bodies and greasy sweetmeats fought with the musk. It was all sordid and unprofitable.

He turned to go—and then stopped in amazement at the sound of a voice in his ears. For the second he thought somebody was in the balcony, and was speaking into the room. A glance showed him that there was no one there, and he stood petrified, rooted to the spot by his astonishment; for the voice—and it rang with

hollow distinctness—was that of his office *peon*, addressing, in the curt accents of authority, some lesser light. He looked at the constable, whose gaping mouth and round eyes showed his bewilderment. The voice continued to rumble in their ears.

'*Aré*, son of a pig! Would you leave the Superintendent Sahib's room unswept? There are three—four scraps of paper lying even now upon the matting. Sweep!' The sound of a blow followed.

'It—it is a spirit!' gasped the policeman.

'By George! no. It's the leakage!'

Macintyre's face crimsoned with excitement; he poked his head through the window, twisted his neck, and looked up into the bulging eave. He tapped the woodwork and listened, and his eyes travelled from the reeded windows of the offices to the balcony roof and back again.

'A perfect sounding-board!' His knuckles called out a hollow knock. 'A voice, either in my room or the collector's, would be thrown upon it and rebound into the lady's ears with

the greatest facility. No wonder Hira Singh's friend preferred her bazaar lodgings to better quarters! Well, there should be no more conjecture. It is all plain-sailing now.'

'The sahib understands?' said the policeman in awe-struck tones.

'Yes, I understand. There is the explanation, *ji*,'—and Macintyre gave a brief lecture on acoustics. 'Go now, swiftly, and give this *chit* to the orderly for the Collector Sahib.' He scribbled a note upon a leaf of his pocket-book. 'Keep a still tongue in your head, as befits a policeman, and tell my *peon*, when you see him, that he has no authority to beat the sweeper *log*.'

The policeman scuttled away with a grin, and Macintyre followed him down the staircase. He went over to the courthouse, put a flask and a roll of bandages into his pocket, buckled on a Sam Browne belt, and inspected the chambers of his revolver. Then he sat upon the veranda steps to watch the evening sky flush to rose and gold and blood-colour, and to wait the coming of fresh horseflesh and Mr Faulkner.

SOME NOTED LINGUISTS OF THE CENTURY.



IN these days of keen commercial competition the value of a thorough knowledge of foreign languages is becoming more and more appreciated. In schools increasing attention is being given to the subject, and Latin and Greek, so long idolised in educational circles, are in great measure being supplanted by French and German. Such being the case, it may not be without interest and stimulus to those now engaged in linguistic studies to give a few particulars of some men of the present century who, in an especial degree, have possessed, or, rather, have acquired, the 'gift of tongues,' and to refer briefly to the extent of their attainments in this direction.

The Italian cardinal, Giuseppe Mezzofanti (1774-1849), is usually considered *facile princeps* in this connection, and his achievements can only be described by Dominic Sampson's 'prodigious!' True, he seems to have been born with a knack for such studies; but it should be borne in mind by those of whom the like cannot be said that hard study and application were the secrets of his success. How many languages did he know? The question should rather be, How many did he not know? Not only did he read fifty or sixty different languages, besides many dialects; he could also speak and write them with surprising fluency; and in a less degree he was familiar with many more. It was his boast that he could converse with natives from practically every quarter of the globe. At the early age of twenty-three he was appointed professor of Arabic in

the University of Bologna; and, after holding various other posts, he became in 1833 librarian at the Vatican, where his extraordinary linguistic gifts must have been of immense value. In the course of his travels Byron met Mezzofanti, of whom, in his journal, he has left a vivacious account, and of the curious test—characteristic of the poet—to which he subjected the great linguist. 'Mezzofanti,' writes Byron, 'is a monster of languages, the Briareus of parts of speech, a walking polyglot who ought to have existed at the Tower of Babel as universal interpreter. He is indeed a marvel—unassuming also. I tried him in all the tongues of which I knew a single oath (or adjuration to the gods against post-boys, savages, Tartars, boatmen, sailors, pilots, gondoliers, muleteers, camel-drivers, vetturini, postmasters, post-horses, post-houses, post-everything), and egad! he astounded me even to my English.'

Niebuhr (1776-1831), the German historian, knew about twenty languages; and another German, Von Gabelentz (1807-74), rivalled Mezzofanti in the extent of his acquirements in this field. While still a schoolboy he devoted much of his leisure to the study of Arabic and Chinese! To these he kept constantly adding, even during his busy public career as a statesman, till, it is said, he knew no fewer than eighty languages, of which he could speak thirty with ease; although, in his modest way, he would say, on being asked how many he knew, 'Only one, and that but imperfectly.' In his case this study was not a mere hobby, as in that of Mezzofanti. He was intensely interested in philology—a science which seems

to present peculiar attractions to the German mind; and it was on this account he prosecuted his studies in so many regions. A large number of grammars were published by him, besides many other learned contributions to this department of knowledge.

But linguistic prodigies have not been confined to Italy or Germany. Our own country has produced not a few who are entitled to a prominent place in the ranks of linguists. Sir John Bowring (1792-1872) seems entitled to the premier place with us. Of no less than forty languages he had a good knowledge, and with many more he had at least a nodding acquaintance. While still a youth he picked up a knowledge of French from a refugee priest, of Italian from various itinerant vendors of barometers, and of Spanish, Portuguese, German, and Dutch through the aid of mercantile friends. Swedish, Danish, Russian, Servian, Polish, Bohemian, Magyar, Arabic, and Chinese were subsequently added to his list, his knowledge of which he perfected during his many and varied wanderings in the course of his commercial—and, later, of his diplomatic—career. Not only did he acquire a sufficient knowledge of foreign languages to be able to translate from them into English; he did what was much more difficult, and what was a really crucial test of his knowledge: he published various works in foreign languages.

George Borrow (1803-81) was another 'Briareus of parts of speech.' Writing of him to Southey, William Taylor of Norwich, a man of considerable note in his day, said: 'A Norwich young man is construing with me Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, with the view of translating it for the press. His name is George Henry Borrow, and he has learnt German with extraordinary rapidity; indeed, he has the gift of tongues, and, though not yet eighteen, understands twelve languages—English, Welsh, Erse, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Danish, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.' Out-of-the-way languages had a special attraction for him, and these he picked up by hobnobbing with all sorts and conditions of men; Welsh he learned from a groom, Irish from a schoolfellow, and Gypsy from the Romanies, of whom he tells us in *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*. Like Bowring, he translated a good deal into foreign languages. The New Testament and several of the homilies of the Church of England he translated into Manchu, besides superintending a similar translation into Tartar; the Gospel of St Luke he rendered into the language of the Gitanos or Spanish gypsies, and—the collocation seems incongruous enough—the story of Blue Beard into Turkish. From his best-known work, *The Bible in Spain*, we get the useful hint that in endeavouring to converse with a foreigner in his language it is highly necessary to use plenty of gesticulation. 'Is it surprising,' he asks, 'that the English are in general the worst linguists in the world? . . .

When they attempt to speak Spanish, the most sonorous tongue in existence, they scarcely open their lips, and, putting their hands in their pockets, fumble lazily, instead of applying them to the indispensable office of gesticulation. Well may the poor Spaniards exclaim, "These English talk so crabbedly that Satan himself would not be able to understand them!"' The phlegmatic Briton fears to look foolish by using his hands overmuch, or otherwise gesticulating; not so the foreigner, especially Frenchmen, whose shoulder-shrugs are as eloquent as Lord Burghley's nod. All the aids obtainable are needed in talking in a foreign language, as one finds, sadly enough, that the French or German which passed muster at home is oftentimes mere gibberish to the person to whom it is addressed. Borrow's hint is therefore worth remembering.

Sir Richard Burton (1821-90), the great traveller, was another expert in many tongues. He had need to be, considering his love of adventure and his habit of gratifying it in dangerous regions in the East. Twenty-nine languages are credited to him.

The Rev. Solomon Caesar Malan (1812-94), whose Life by his son was published a short time ago, was another instance of remarkable linguistic knowledge. As a boy he was taught by his father in Geneva—his native city—to converse in Latin, and to speak in various other tongues. While still a young man he came to England and entered the University of Oxford. Although he had a fair knowledge of English, he was at first diffident of his power to do justice in that language to the subjects of his essays; he accordingly petitioned the authorities for permission to write his papers in one of six other languages—French, German, Spanish, Italian, Latin, or Greek! Naturally the examiners were startled by this amazing request, which, he was informed, could not be granted. In addition to the languages named, Malan had an extensive acquaintance with many Oriental tongues.

Of Americans similarly gifted, mention must be made of Elihu Burritt (1810-79), 'the learned blacksmith' and advocate of universal brotherhood. When about twenty-one, after working for several years at the forge, his ambition was roused to master the ancient languages; and his success with these lured him on to fresh fields. His list included Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Portuguese, Flemish, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Welsh, Gaelic, and Russian—a tolerably comprehensive catalogue to be mastered by a man in his circumstances.

One hardly expects to find in a village merchant either the capacity or the desire to solace the tedium of his life with the study of languages. But at least of one such we are told by Dr John Brown, the genial author of the immortal *Rab*. His uncle, a merchant in Biggar—which, notwithstanding the local witticism, 'London's big, but

Biggar was did subj and met any he n ever



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Biggar's Bigger,' is merely a small country town—was in every way a remarkable man. Not only did he grapple with mathematics and kindred subjects; he mastered 'Hebrew, Sanscrit, Greek, and Latin, to the veriest rigours of prosody and metre, Spanish and Italian, German, French, and any odd language that came in his way.' Homer he made it a matter of conscience to read once every four years, and *Don Quixote* 'he knew by

heart, and from the living Spanish.' It is probable enough that this wonderful man might not have been able to speak the languages he was able to read; but as he held the keys to open so many literary treasures, his intellectual satisfaction must have been great. Indeed, the lot of all those men should have been singularly happy if it be true, as was said by Charles V., that 'with every new language learnt one acquires a new soul.'

NOTES FROM BERLIN.

OLD MANUSCRIPTS IN BERLIN.



HE Royal Library in Berlin possesses manuscripts of the greatest value, many of which throw light on the history of art. Among the oldest are leaves of a Latin translation of the Bible made in the sixth century, and a Psalter written for Ludwig the German in the ninth. On the first two pages of the latter stand in golden letters the words, *Hludovico regi vita salus felicitas perpes* ('Everlasting life, health, and happiness to King Louis'). At the end are hymns and prayers, and a picture of Christ on the cross. The initials are magnificently done. Another treasure is a twelfth-century manuscript of Wernher's *Life of Mary*, with exquisite miniatures. One of the finest is Jacob's Dream, a picture half the size of a man's hand, framed in red and gold. Another represents Mary resting with the Child. There is also an interesting manuscript of the thirteenth century, Heinrich von Veldeke's German translation of a free French translation of the *Aeneid*. In the illustrations gods and men strut about in heavy medieval armour. In the picture of Aeneas leaving Dido, a ribbon issues from Dido's mouth bearing the words in old High German, 'Oh! woe is me that ever I saw you, unfaithful man!' The pen-drawings in Wernher von Tegernsee's *Song of the Magi* are splendid. Another manuscript of about the year 1300 contains fragments of 'Wolfdietrich,' one of the songs of the *Heldenbuch* (Hero-Book).

REMINISCENCES OF GOETHE.

A Swedish literary man who visited Goethe's house at Weimar in 1838 heard some interesting things from his cicerone, who had acted as secretary to the poet. Goethe, it seems, had a special aversion to tobacco, dogs, and spectacles. When spectaclered people called they were courteously requested to ungoggle themselves before admission to the Olympic presence; he wanted to see people's naked eyes, he said. When his mother died, and her furniture was sold, a Duke of Mecklenburg, who was an admirer of his, bought an old clock and had it placed secretly near Goethe's bed. When

he awoke in the morning and heard the old familiar tones, and how they came there, he burst into tears. He was nearly sixty then.

A LIBRARY OF HUMOUR.

The Berlin publisher Pfeilstücker is bringing out a new twelve-volume edition of 'The Library of Humour.' The first volume, entitled *Medical Humour*, has already appeared, and contains a vast store of amusing anecdotes of medical men and apothecaries. The second will be entitled *Humour in Prussian History*; the third, *Clerical Humour*; the fourth, *Teachers and Pupils*; the fifth, *Legal Humour*; the sixth, *Love, Matrimony, and Family*; the seventh, *Anecdotes and Episodes from German History*; the eighth, *Anecdotes and Episodes from Recent German History*; the ninth, *Literary Men, Artists, and Poets*; the tenth, *The Theatre*; the eleventh, *Music*; and the twelfth, *Military Humour*.

GOETHE'S LOVE OF CHILDREN.

In his leisure hours Goethe busied himself with literature, mineralogy, optics, anatomy, drawing, numismatics, and botany. He often complained that Nature had predisposed him for privacy, but Destiny had 'patched him into a princely family and the administration of a state.' For this irony of fate he indemnified himself in his own way. He had always felt attracted to children; intercourse with them made him young and happy. At Easter-time he invited his young friends to look for Easter eggs in his garden. The small fry, little Herders and Wielands among them, ran all over the place, and fought pitched battles for possession when they found the cunningly hidden treasure at last. Goethe played with them till evening, and then crowned the entertainment with a pyramid of sweetmeats.

There is a widow named Castner still living in Berlin who was born at Weimar in 1812, and who had the honour of congratulating Goethe on his birthday in 1823 and 1824. It had long been a privilege of a great public school there that the four best girls were allowed to congratulate him on his birthday. They went in their best white dresses adorned with flowers, each bearing a plate with a heap of the loveliest flowers artistically

piled round a lemon. The valet received and announced them. Then Goethe came, accepted the flower-heaps one by one, heard each child recite a little poem, and shook hands and talked with them, inquiring about this and that. The flowers were shaken into a basket, and the lemons collected on a plate. The children's plates were returned to them. At last Goethe beckoned to the valet, who laid 'half a headpiece' (an old Austrian coin) on each child's plate. This meant that the audience was ended. The old lady says this is one of the brightest reminiscences of her childhood.

THE ORIGIN OF SMOKING.

In a book entitled *The Origin of the African Civilisations*, recently published in Berlin, the author (L. Frobenius) discusses the origin of smoking. He suggests that living in chimneyless huts invested smoke with the undying charm of early association; that the work of blowing the fire (which entailed the inhaling of smoke) was a goal of childish ambition, because it required a certain degree of discretion; and that the original purpose of pipe-smoking may have been the practical one of keeping the fire alive.

THE BELL OF DAR-ES-SALAM.

From the west tower of the fortress at Dar-es-Salam, in German East Africa, float every day at 11.30 A.M. and 5.30 P.M. the tones of a bell which has a peculiar history. Arabs found it centuries ago among the débris of a wrecked Norwegian barque. About ten years ago Wissmann discovered it by chance, took it from the Arabs, and hung it in the tower. It bears the following inscription in old German letters:

Ich bin in Gottes Namen durchs Feuer geflossen;
Hans Oleman von Magdeburg hat mich gegossen.

A. 1583

('I flowed in God's name through the fire; Hans Oleman of Magdeburg cast me.—A.D. 1583'). It does not do Hans Oleman much honour, for its tones are not silvery, but pewtery.

THE OLD DESSAUER.

Every one who has read Carlyle's *Frederick* must remember Prince Leopold of Anhalt Dessau, surnamed 'The Old Dessauer,' as one of the many striking figures in that most painfully-written but, strange to say, most entertaining of history-books. Carlyle often speaks of him as an inventive military genius of the first order, the great drill-sergeant, not of the Prussian army only, but ultimately of all armies deserving the name. He and his masters (Frederick William the First and Frederick the Great) gave Prussia the long start she still has in military matters. His first innovation was the iron ramrod. In 1698 he introduced it in the grenadier companies of his Prussian regiment, and next year in the rest. By 1719 the whole Prussian army had it. It enabled foot-soldiers to fire five times a minute—

that is, three times oftener than before. In Frederick's great wars it played the same part as the needle-gun in 1866—a case of history repeating itself which alone goes far to explain why Prussia has beaten Austria in the race. It was Leopold, too, who introduced marching in step, which gave military movements, especially in long lines, greater firmness. But the boldest and most brilliant of his innovations was the cavalry-gallop. At Mollwitz, Frederick's first victory, the Prussian cavalry attacked at the trot, but seldom or never again. Though Leopold gained only one great battle—the only one in which he commanded in chief—he was one of the greatest soldiers that ever lived; he left the Prussian army a much swifter and more solid death-dealing machine than he found it.

THE HARBOUR AT NIGHT: PICTON, NEW ZEALAND.

WARM is the night and still; the misty clouds
Obscure the moon so that there scarce is light
Left in the world; all round, the silent hills
Sleep mystically; and no night-haunting bird
Startles the glooming trees with mournful cry.
Silent the harbour sleeps, but myriad lights
Spread, phosphorescent, out from shore to shore—
Ripples and streaks of fire that live and die
Moment by moment, till the waters seem
Like to a sky of darkest purply-blue
Turned upside-down, and thick with silver stars.

Like silver phantoms round the weedy piles
Of the dim-lighted wharf the fishes pass
In endless-seeming lines from right to left,
Ever the one direction following. Far away,
And faint with distance, through the moonless air
The steamer's whistle sounds; anon her lights
Shine, dim and misty, as she rounds the point,
While answering lights glare out upon the wharf.
She nearer comes—the water 'neath her bows
Is streaked with trembling lines of green and red
And golden hues, that broad and broader grow
As on she creeps, a larger-looming form
Whose ever-throbbing engines beat and beat.

Now in her path the ghost-like silver fish—
With sound of quick and sudden little waves
Rising and flapping on a sandy shore—
Affrighted leap; then for a moment sound
Dies all away, and then breaks forth again
In throb of engines, shouts, and rattling chains,
And hissing steam, as to the trembling wharf
The vessel is made fast. The flaring lamps
Flicker and flame in the soft rainy air,
And cast a glow upon the busy scene
Of loading and unloading; silence flies
Into the darkest hollows of the hills.

CLARA SINGER POYNTER.